

A One-Day Symposium

Considering the ways in which
contemporary art embraces people

Organised by Artists in the City, Reading Borough Council,
and the Department of Fine Art, University of Reading

**SEARCHING >>
>>> FOR THE
SPECTATOR >>
>>> ART FOR
NEW PUBLICS**

Saturday 22 September 2007

11am – 5pm

University of Reading

Whiteknights

Reading

Berkshire

THE AGENDA

Artists continue to explore and exploit new ways of working that challenge conventional boundaries and confront the complex relationships between artist, environment and spectator. Working in the public domain is in itself not new, but the traditional focus on site and context is now joined by a consideration of people, and by the way in which artists seek to involve, create and engage with new and diverse audiences.

This one-day symposium will look at the ways in which contemporary artists are involving the public as an integral and influencing factor within their practice. Writers, academics, curators and artists will contribute to the day's discussions which will look at how and why some artists working today open up their work to embrace a contribution from the public which ultimately affects both the form and the content of the final piece.

The public in this instance can be defined in many different ways – for example, as passers-by encountering and participating in the work unexpectedly, as

professionals from other disciplines invited to perform a specific role, or as members of a particular community which brings its own political agenda to the work. The papers will consider how far it is possible for the public to become both viewer and subject of the work, whilst resisting the possibility of becoming objectified by the artist for the benefit of his or her art.

Some speakers will touch on the issue of monument, exploring how far this term is relevant to the fluid and flexible contexts within which much public work is commissioned and within the agendas of individual artists who seek to articulate a new definition of monument for both public and private settings.

The programme is organised by Jeni Walwin, independent curator and Project Director, Artists in the City and Alun Rowlands, artist, curator and Lecturer in the Department of Fine Art at the University of Reading. Documents from the symposium will form the basis of a publication of the same name to be published later in the year, and incorporating a review of highlights from the Artists in the City programme.

The following artists, curators and writers will contribute to the day's proceedings. This is not the full and final programme – further linked events and presentations are currently being negotiated. Please see www.artistsinthecity.org.uk for updates.

Jonathan Dronsfield (Chair)

Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield is Reader in Theory & Philosophy of Art, University of Reading, and sits on the Forum for European Philosophy at the London School of Economics. He has published many articles in the area of contemporary continental philosophy and art theory, and on the relation of art practice to ethics, in particular art's resistance to ethics. He is currently writing a book with Thomas Hirschhorn and Marcus Steinweg on Headlessness.

Sophie Hope (B + B Curators)

Sophie Hope has worked for a number of visual arts organisations and as a freelance evaluator and researcher, most recently in Hungary developing 'Spaces for Constructive Discourse' at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Transport. In 2000 she founded B+B, a curatorial partnership with Sarah Carrington. B+B provides a platform for discussion and debate on the role of the artist in society. Through consultation, events, exhibitions, research, residencies and workshops, B+B test and critique the role of the artist as an agent for change. B+B argue that art has the potential to change society whilst defending the notion it should be allowed to do what it does best: ask questions without providing solutions and shift understandings without claiming to empower.

Juneau Projects

Juneau Projects were formed in 2001 as a

collaborative practice by Ben Sadler and Philip Duckworth. Based in Birmingham, they have exhibited nationwide and internationally. Their work engages with people and folk histories, bringing together live work and installation in new interactive combinations. **Stag becomes Eagle**, a large scale commission for the RSPB, brought together local young people in Purfleet, Essex. In 2006 they worked with a village of farmers in Toge, Japan to create a sculptural honesty box at a nearby beauty spot. The box was stocked with local produce and a specially recorded cd which featured the villagers singing songs and telling stories about their home. **I'm going to antler you** involved two youth groups forming 'rival' bands and **Instincts are misleading, you shouldn't think what you're feeling**, a participatory installation commissioned by FACT Liverpool.

London Fieldworks

(Bruce Gilchrist and Jo Joelson)

London Fieldworks have been engaged in a sustained enquiry into human consciousness and its relationship with natural or elemental rhythms, visualised through the charting of sleep patterns and the science of light. Art projects such as **Syzygy** and **Polaria** that typically engage with technology and the methodologies of science, have been far reaching both geographically and in terms of the range of collaborators and disciplines involved. Their most recent project **Hibernator: Prince of the Petrified Forest** opened at Beaconsfield in South London in March this year. The project began with research into the behaviour of hibernating animals which led to an exploration of human hibernation experiments and visitors were able to witness the making of an animation during the show.

Graeme Miller

Graeme Miller is a theatre maker, composer and artist whose work encompasses site-specific installations, theatre and dance works, all of which reflect a sense of landscape and place. A film with John Smith, **Lost Sound** documents the secret life of a small neighbourhood through images, sounds and retrieved music of lost recording tape found hanging in the streets. **Linked** is a three-mile long semi-permanent sound installation in East London incorporating the voices, memories and testimonies of people who used to live where the M11 link road now runs. **Bassline** a sound and video installation created for the Vienna Festival and **Beheld**, an installation which maps places where stowaways have fallen from aircraft.

Paul O'Neill

Paul O'Neill is a curator, artist and writer, based in London and Bristol. He is currently Research Fellow with Situations in Bristol, where he is leading **Locating the Producers** a three year international research project investigating the commissioning and curating of place-based art. Since 2003, he has dedicated his time to researching the development of curatorial discourses during the last twenty years as part of a PhD scholarship at Middlesex University. His paper for the symposium entitled **Curating The Spectator: The Organisation of Art's Reception** will consider the relationship between curating and its involvement in the structuring of the experience of art.

Nina Pope

Nina Pope & Karen Guthrie began their collaboration in 1995 since when they have undertaken a series of ground breaking

commissions for many major institutions including one of the earliest artists' projects for the web. **Bata-ville: We are not afraid of the future** takes the form of a road movie, but the towns at the heart of the film, East Tilbury, Maryport and Zlin, are all 'nowhere' places, linked only by past connections to the Bata shoe empire and current government-led regeneration agendas. In real terms, the 42 people who make the journey to Zlin have little in common, yet by the end of the film they describe themselves as the 'Bata family ... here on the bus'. The film is almost a pilgrimage in search of the origins of entrepreneur Tomas Bata's utopian vision – a journey to see if this vision might still be relevant for the artists, the passengers and their home-towns. Nina Pope's presentation will include a contribution from one of Bata-ville's participants, Mike Ostler.

Adam Sutherland (Director, Grizedale Arts)

Adam Sutherland is Director of Grizedale Arts where he has developed a wide ranging artist centred programme that incorporates the local cultures of the Lake District – historical, political and economic. He has recently curated large scale live and socially engaged programmes at PS1 – New York, Echigo-Tsumari Triennale – Japan and for the A Foundation at the Liverpool Biennale. Future projects include the establishment of an arts TV station with the A Foundation at Rochelle in East London in September, the redevelopment of two hill farms as experimental art and agriculture spaces and participation in a residency programme in rural China with Vitamin Creative Space. He has also written extensively for the visual arts.

BOOKING FORM

To book a place at the symposium **Searching for the Spectator: Art for New Publics**

Please fill in the form below and send it with a cheque for your booking fee to:

Laura Eldret
Searching for the Spectator
South Street Arts Centre
21 South Street
Reading RG1 4QU

Cheques should be made payable to Reading Borough Council.

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Mobile phone number _____

Representing which organisation (if relevant) _____

Any special dietary requirements _____

Any access requirements _____

I enclose a cheque to confirm my place as a delegate at the above symposium.

Signed _____ Date _____

Booking Fees

Delegate Fees (to include lunch, coffee and tea) £70

Concessions:

Artists and freelance arts professionals £25

Full time students £10

Directions to the venue, travel options and accommodation details will be sent on receipt of bookings.

For other information contact: artistsinthecity@reading.gov.uk

or Laura Eldret on T: 020 8341 7842

